

VZCZCXRO5424  
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHKUK RUEHROV  
DE RUEHMS #0303 0851255  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 261255Z MAR 07  
FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8010  
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0478  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0370  
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

UNCLAS MUSCAT 000303

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STATE FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/PPD, NEA/PI, AND INR/R/MR  
STATE PASS USTR FOR N. MOORJANI, J. BUNTIN  
LONDON FOR TSOU  
PARIS FOR ZEYA  
USCENTCOM FOR PLUSH  
FOREIGN PRESS CENTER FOR SILAS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KPAO](#) [KMDR](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: NEW PALESTINIAN GOVERNMENT, U.S. ROLE IN  
PERCEPTIONS ABOUT IRAQ

¶1. SUMMARY: Government-owned "Oman" emphasizes the role of the international community in pushing the peace process forward and not accepting the "obstacles" Israel creates; "Oman" also condemns the latest escalation between Fatah and Hamas. Privately owned "Al-Watan" accuses the U.S. of trying to create "mental chaos" in peoples' thinking about Iraq, which will "obscure reality."

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"MORAL RESPONSIBILITY" TO SUPPORT NEW GOVERNMENT  
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¶2. In an editorial entitled "The Palestinian Issue and the International Community," government-owned "Oman" (circulation 38,000) wrote on March 23 that:

"When the Palestinians succeeded in forming the new national unity government, which included ministers from different political powers, Israel started to create obstacles as usual... The International community is morally and legally responsible for supporting the new government, and must not back Israeli claims that complicate the regional political situation... Israel is looking for more confrontation between Hamas and Fatah because confrontation benefits their plans and diverts the world's attention from the main cause of Middle East conflict, the Palestinian issue."

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PALESTINIANS' "BLIND ESCALATION"  
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¶3. On March 25, "Oman" expressed sadness on the renewal of clashes between Hamas and Fatah in an editorial entitled "Unjustified Waste of the Palestinians' Energies":

"At a time when everyone, including Arabs, other friends of the Palestinian cause, and international powers are acknowledging the Palestinian government of national unity and the necessity of dealing with it, the Palestinian arena is unfortunately witnessing renewed armed conflicts between Fatah and Hamas. The question arises: why are they renewing their clashes at the beginning of a new government? This blind escalation is hurting innocents rather than the ones directly involved and contributing to the renewal of conflicts. The only interests being served here are of those who prefer continued fighting."

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U.S. CREATING "MENTAL CHAOS" ABOUT IRAQ  
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14. "Al-Watan" (privately owned, circulation 42,000) wrote on March 24, "How Long Will They Continue Deceiving Us?":

"Given Washington's huge failure in Iraq, we must ask: how long will they continue deceiving us? It is clear that Washington wants to draw the world's attention away from the political and security chaos in Iraq and create mental chaos in the minds of people who are trying to evaluate the situation. In other words, Americans are forcing the world to use American definitions of the issues and American perceptions of events, which obscures reality. The situation is becoming very embarrassing. An explosion took place near the [UN] Secretary General Ban ki-Moon and another assassination incident was set to take place against the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister by people who were supposed to defend him. Isn't this bitter sarcasm? How can we still believe American President Bush's repeated assertions about being on the verge of victory in Iraq?"

GRAPPO